

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

INFORMATION REPORT

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ECONOMIC CONDITIONS IN KRASNOGORSK

1. There was a great improvement in general living conditions in the Krasnogorsk area after the 1947 currency reform. Housing conditions, which remained intolerable, were an exception to this general rule. This improvement was obvious to the casual observer, even in the general appearance of the local population. This was especially

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true of the women . They were far better fed and clothed when we left the Soviet Union than at the time of our arrival. However, I might note in this connection that the average unmarried working girl literally had to starve herself for a period in order to save enough money to buy a new dress.

2. As Krasnogorsk was not much more than a suburb of Moscow, the prices of groceries and other consumer goods were the same there as in the capital city. There was, of course, a far smaller selection of goods in Krasnogorsk than in Moscow.
3. Price cuts introduced after the currency reform primarily affected food products. The prices of clothing items remained fairly constant after the currency reform. The most recent price cut in March 1952 mainly affected expensive consumer goods and had little effect in reducing the prices of standard food products. The Soviet workers expressed their disappointment about this development. The prices of certain items affected by the last two or three price cuts subsequently slowly rose back to their original prices. This was especially true of butter and textile goods. Also noteworthy was the fact that most textile goods available in Krasnogorsk stores in the last two years had been manufactured in Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary. The Soviet population recognized the superior quality of these products. They were in great demand.
4. In my opinion, the average Soviet worker was satisfied with present-day living conditions. He was satisfied with conditions which seemed primitive to us, as he had seen and knew so little of higher standards of living in Western Europe. It is true that some Soviets occasionally remarked that goods had been cheaper in the USSR before the war. But at the same time, they remembered the hard and bitter days during the war and before the currency reform. They were thankful for the progress achieved.
5. Soviet workers at Plant No. 393 would not believe the stories we told them about the relative prosperity of workers in Germany. However, several personal experiences convinced me that Soviet soldiers who served in the West during and after the war were highly impressed with the standard of living there. This contact with life in the West caused them to be dissatisfied with living conditions in the Soviet Union.
6. According to rumors which I heard, Soviet soldiers returning from duty in Austria and Germany were required to attend reorientation courses before being discharged. They were not allowed to resettle in their native cities or towns. This reputed policy of resettlement among strangers hindered them in talking about their experiences in Western Europe.
7. Despite their low wages, Soviet men consumed great amounts of alcohol. Many, if not most, of the male workers in our plant went on a binge for the first few days after payday and then were "broke" and "on the wagon" for another two weeks. I found it interesting to observe Soviet workers in the local tavern. They did not sit down and spend an entire evening over three or four quiet beers and pleasant conversation. They started to drink furiously on arriving at the tavern.

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passed out within an hour, and went to sleep in a corner.

8. Drinking was really a passion with many Soviet workers at the plant. Some were always borrowing money between paydays in order to buy 100 cc. of vodka. Others were continually getting drunk on industrial alcohol which we had at the plant for thinning out lacquer and cleaning lenses. Even the shop chiefs nipped on this supply during working hours.

SOCIOLOGICAL CONDITIONS

Religion

9. The nearest church was located in Pavshino, a railroad center adjacent to Krasnogorsk. There was no church in Krasnogorsk itself. It had been just a small village prior to the construction of factories and apartment buildings there during the 1920's and 1930's. The Pavshino church, which was open when we arrived in 1946, held weekly religious services. I observed that the church was always filled to the breaking point on such occasions. The church was so crowded that many were forced to stand outside in order to hear the services. A few Germans who attended the church informed me that most churchgoers were elderly people from Krasnogorsk. They also noticed that many members of the younger generation began to attend church in recent years.
10. It seemed that the entire population of Krasnogorsk celebrated Easter. They baked their cakes and exchanged Easter eggs in the Russian fashion. The older generation also celebrated Christmas.
11. On several occasions, I visited nearby collective farms in order to purchase potatoes and other vegetables. It was interesting to note that icons, often decorated with fresh flowers, were to be seen in all of the many farmhouses which I visited.

Nationalities

12. It was obvious to me that Great Russians disliked and were prejudiced against Soviet Jews. Russian workers at Plant No. 393 told me more than once that "one thing wrong with Hitler is that he did not kill enough Jews". Although the Russians gave no reasons for this antagonism, I believe they resented the fact that Soviet Jews occupied many high positions. Many shop chiefs at Plant No. 393 were Jews. The Russian workers in dealing with these nachalniki frequently received a "raw deal" in wage matters. Perhaps they developed a dislike of Jews on this account.

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Crime and Begging

15. I was not aware of any particularly high incidence of crime in the Krasnogorsk area. Prior to 1948, pickpocketing, practiced by gangs of youths from 14 to 16 years of age, was a very common occurrence. Pickpocketing and other forms of petty thievery decreased after the currency reform.
16. Soviet petty officials were generally proper in dealing with the German specialists. I observed no abnormal incidence of bribery or corruption.
17. The number of beggars in Krasnogorsk also decreased after the currency reform. Most of the relatively few beggars who were to be seen on the streets of Krasnogorsk in later years were war veterans and older people. There were probably no more beggars in Krasnogorsk than would be found in a similar town in Western Europe.

POLITICAL CONDITIONSSoviet Attitudes

18. I received the distinct impression that Stalin was not well liked by the average Soviet citizen. I often heard comments from Soviet workers to the effect that, if Lenin had lived, the Soviet regime would have followed different and better policies than had been the case under Stalin. Lenin was greatly respected, if not revered, by my Soviet acquaintances. Many of them felt that Stalin had distorted Lenin's original policies. Stalin was also criticized as being too militaristic.
19. The Soviet population in Krasnogorsk seemed to be very proud of the Moscow subway and the large buildings which were recently constructed in the capital city. They regarded with pride the cultural achievements of the Russian people in the fields of music, art, and architecture. My Soviet acquaintances were also proud of the victory of the USSR in World War II. They claimed that they alone had won the war, without the benefit of foreign aid and support.
20. The Soviet workers seemed to be proud of the state-supported rest homes which were placed at their disposal, although it

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appeared to me that these institutions were usually reserved for the use of high-ranking military officers and state officials. The plant workers spoke with pride about the Arkhangelsk sanatorium which was situated a short distance from Krasnogorsk. This rest home was located in a former residence of the imperial family. Incidentally, only very high-ranking army officers and Party officials were cared for at the Arkhangelsk sanatorium.

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21. To judge by the complaints of my Soviet fellow workers, they were most dissatisfied with the fact that they were forced against their wishes to contribute to yearly state loans. High prices and shortages of consumer goods were the second major source of discontent. In particular, the Soviet workers complained about the shortage of textile goods and the fact that the March 1952 price reduction brought negligible relief.
22. It was noteworthy that production norms were apparently somewhat increased after the introduction of price cuts, although they were supposed to remain constant. The Soviet workers at Plant No. 393 recognized this fact and expressed their dissatisfaction accordingly.
23. Housing was also a sore point. Once I was told by one of our guides that every Soviet family would have 100 square meters of living space at its disposal within two or three years. I repeated this story to our Soviet shop boss. I told him sarcastically that he did not have to build his own house, as the government would provide him with 100 square meters in three years or so. The man laughed scornfully and replied, "Three generations will have come and gone in the Soviet Union before that comes to pass. In the USSR, the workers live under the ground, we little shop bosses are perhaps high enough up to poke our heads out of the ground, while the ministers and other Party bosses are living in the clouds".
24. In my opinion, the average Soviet citizen was convinced that South Korea was the aggressor in the Korean War. In the early days of the war, there was much talk among the Soviet workers at the plant about the possibilities that "in a few days, the Americans will be pushed into the water". But, with the American offensive and the turn of the tide in Korea, the subject was dropped immediately. Thereafter, it was no longer a topic of daily discussion among the Soviet workers.
25. I was unaware of any pronounced fear on the part of my Soviet colleagues that the Korean War would generalize into a new world war involving the Soviet Union. I was also unable to determine whether or not the Soviet population was particularly fearful of the likelihood of a new world war, because I was not fluent enough in the Russian language and had too little contact with the Soviet population. However, one thing was certain. The average Soviet citizen was a peace-loving individual and desired no war.

Foreign Radio Broadcasts

26. I received several indications that the Soviet population was interested in listening to radio broadcasts from the

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West. First, there was a great demand for radios, especially after about 1948 when radio prices were lowered and better models were available (Baltika and VEF). According to German specialists who bought radios locally, the local store sold out shipments of radios on the same day they were received. To my knowledge, all radios sold in the Krasnogorsk store were equipped to receive short-wave broadcasts.

27. According to a German specialist, who as a sideline repaired radios belonging to Soviet families, they always wanted him to improve the short-wave reception of their radios? Some of these radio owners specifically told him that they wished to hear broadcasts from the West in the Russian language.
28. Finally, Soviet employees at Plant No. 393 who bought radios from departing German specialists always demanded that the radios should be able to receive short-wave broadcasts. Inasmuch as few Soviet stations broadcast on short-wave lengths, I assume that intelligent Soviets were tired of hearing Soviet propaganda on domestic stations and were interested in hearing different opinions concerning world problems.
29. I received no indication that the Soviet Government was attempting to reduce potential audiences for foreign radio stations other than by means of jamming. As noted earlier, all radios on sale were to my knowledge equipped for short-wave reception. Secondly, I noted no increased emphasis on radio loudspeaker networks in the Krasnogorsk area. True, all apartments in the Broshati settlement were equipped with a loudspeaker network outlet. The average worker relied on a wired loudspeaker rather than a radio for his listening pleasure. However, this represented no new development but was only the result of the low incomes of Soviet workers.

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Comments: The present source agrees with numerous other REG sources that price reductions introduced in the USSR after 1949 had less effect in raising the standard of living than the first two price cuts in the postwar period. In stating that production norms at Plant No. 393 were apparently increased after the enactment of some price reduction laws, the source concurs with several other sources in this series who have reported the same development at their places of employment in the Soviet Union.

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1. Comment. See also

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2. Comment. This German specialist is . For further details on foreign radio broadcasts gained by Querschfeld in repairing radios, see paragraphs 11, 12, and 13. The present report should not be taken as confirmation of the information in

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